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Fifty-third year

STRENGTHENING OF THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS, INCLUDING SPECIAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE

REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES: QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES AND RETURNEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS AND HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS

HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS

Letter dated 29 December 1998 from the Permanent Representative of Eritrea to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to forward to you the enclosed self-explanatory press release issued today, 29 December 1998, by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Eritrea (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would kindly circulate the text of the present letter and its annex as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 20, 105 and 110, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Haile MENKERIOS
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

ANNEX

Press release issued on 29 December 1998 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Eritrea

Eritreans still dying in the detention camps in Ethiopia

Once again the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has informed the Government of Eritrea about the untimely death of two young civilian Eritreans in a detention camp in Ethiopia. The two young Eritreans, Mohammed Said Abdulbeker Idris and Mohamedzeyen Said Kahsay, had been in detention for months and died there because of inhuman treatment and lack of proper medical attention. Like all Eritrean civilian detainees in concentration camps in Ethiopia, the two young Eritreans were detained illegally and without due process of law.

It is to be recalled that the deaths of three other young Eritreans, including a university student who was studying in Ethiopia on an exchange programme, were reported by ICRC in November 1998.

Many other Eritrean civilians are also dying in other concentration camps, particularly in Tigrai; these deaths are unaccounted for by the International Committee of the Red Cross. Yemane Gehreselassie Shardai, aged 62, is one of the recent victims. He died in the concentration camp of Azha in Tigrai on 6 December 1998.

The Government of Eritrea condemns the death of its nationals under illegal and inhuman detention in Ethiopia and calls for an independent investigation into the causes of, and circumstances surrounding, their death. It also calls for an immediate release of all Eritrean civilians - including 37 university exchange students who have been detained by the Ethiopian Government en masse, illegally and without due process of law - from detention in Ethiopia.

The Government of Eritrea once again calls upon the international community to ensure that Ethiopia respects the international laws, covenants and charters on human rights to which it is a signatory and to release all Eritrean civilians in detention immediately.